1: Melamid K-4 (no date) 1953 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4 Qatar MK3

tively recent, since none of the earlier observers comment much on them. Wood and sailcloth for boats have to be imported from a distance, a situation that may have seriously hampered these occupations in the past. In view of the absence of a hinterland and the poverty of the shore, there seems to have been little opportunity for trade. Recently the export (probably smuggled) to Iran of imported sugar and textiles is reported to have grown, but no statistics are available.

Armed interference with the ships plying the ancient trade routes from India and East Africa to Basra and the West through the Strait of Hormuz and the narrow funnel of the Persian Gulf was the major source of income for the inhabitants. The area became known as the "Pirate Coast," a name still found on many maps. Attacks on British ships took place as late as 1905, and the attack on a large Arab dhow in 1944 has been reported.[4] Prevention of piracy would have required the constant presence of relatively large fleets to block the many inlets into which the pirates could withdraw their small ships. An alternative would have been the occupation of the whole coast—a costly procedure, and hardly worth while economically. Therefore trading powers in the Persian Gulf, such as the Portuguese in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the Moslem empires before and after, limited their repression of piracy to occasional raids ashore in which one or two main pirate strongholds would be captured and held for a short time. Obviously, such measures were neither effective nor permanent.

From the end of the eighteenth century on, British trade in the Persian Gulf became increasingly important, and after many vicissitudes a British fleet was dispatched in 1819–1820 to punish and eliminate the pirates. After the usual bombardments the sheikhs of the coast were made to sign a solemn agreement not to fight one another; this was supposed to remove the main cause of piracy. Further, they promised to refrain themselves from piracy and to suppress it among their subjects. However, as soon as the British fleet withdrew, the agreement was broken. After another show of British arms, another treaty was signed by the sheikhs in 1835. Unlike the earlier agreement, the covenant of 1835 did not provide for universal peace, but only for a maritime truce: the sheikhs agreed not to fight one another on the sea, or to engage themselves, or permit their subjects to engage, in piracy—war on land was still permitted. In return, the British government agreed not to interfere in the internal affairs of the sheikhdoms, including their many land wars. Perhaps because of this unique outlet for the energies of the sheikhs

[4] For example, by O'Shea, *op. cit.*, p. 116

1: Melamid K-4 (no date) 1953 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4
Qatar MK3

in the towns along the coast. A further basis of the Iranian claim is the high proportion of the trade of the region that appears to flow to and from Iran, and is in the hands of Iranian traders, many of whom have migrated to the coast in the last 25 years. In 1951 discussions were reported to have begun between Great Britain and Saudi Arabia regarding the boundaries between the various British protectorates and Saudi Arabia, but at the time of this writing (late 1952) no conclusions have been announced.

Despite these political uncertainties and the resulting absence of civil authority, test wells are being drilled in Trucial 'Oman. Two in the sheikhdom of Dibai (at Jebel Ali and Ras Sedr) have been abandoned at a depth of 12,000 feet. A third well, in the sheikhdom of Abu Dhabi, is now planned, 12 miles inland from Tarif. Because of the shallow waters off Tarif, drilling equipment and other supplies will have to be discharged at Zubaya, 65 miles distant. As in Qatar, considerable local construction will be necessary before any commercial production of oil can be undertaken.

Since President Truman's claim in 1945 to United States jurisdiction over the resources located underneath the shallow seas of the continental shelf off the United States, no fewer than eleven states in the Persian Gulf area have asserted similar, if not more sweeping, rights, in spite of the absence of many boundaries on land.[16] Probably most of these claims contradict one another. So far, oil has been struck at only one point offshore in the Persian Gulf, in the extreme northwest part, effectively claimed by Saudi Arabia. However, even before this discovery the sheikhs of Qatar and Abu Dhabi, independently of each other, had granted concessions to their proclaimed offshore resources to another company, which is not a partner in the Saudi Arabian oil concession or in the Iraq Petroleum Company. In both cases the subsidiaries of this company holding the oil concessions from Qatar and from the sheikhdoms of Trucial 'Oman complained that these offshore concessions infringed on their rights, which they maintained included all resources under the jurisdiction of the sheikhs. Both disputes were arbitrated under the terms of the concession agreements. In 1950 the arbitrator in the case of Qatar, Lord Radcliffe, distinguished between the territory of Qatar, which includes the sea and subsurface resources up to the three-mile limit, and other rights of Qatar in the open sea beyond the three-mile limit. Throughout the territory of Qatar as defined by the arbitrator the concession of the Iraq Petroleum Company's subsidiary is valid; elsewhere, wherever

[16] S. W. Boggs: National Claims in Adjacent Seas, *Geogr. Rev.*, Vol. 41, 1951, pp. 185–200, summarizes the complicated situation before arbitration.

006 and pointed out that if we were based there we should have no need of motor-cars. The Khan Sahib tactfully hedged him off this subject, since he realized that I had no desire to commit myself to any statement which the sheikh might construe as an official decision.

622 [471] 245 439 We were on safe ground when we asked him about the date plantations, for the sheikh is one of the largest plantation owners in Oman, and a considerable part of his income is derived from the sale of dates. It appeared that the crop was doing excellently this year, but, owing to the war and the shortage of transport, the demand from foreign countries had dropped considerably. He was, therefore, exporting greater quantities to India and Egypt, although a fair amount was being shipped to South Africa and America. When we told him that people in England had seen very few dates during the war, and that the few which were on sale were rationed, he was very sympathetic. He knew little about [262] English food and, being an Arab, could scarcely imagine how a household could exist without dates.

578 Praise Allah, he said, they had experienced no drought or plague of insects this year, but they had suffered from raids from the hills. The cursed Shi'hou tribesmen (might they die of plague in their filthy caves!) had been attacking and robbing his labourers, so that they were afraid to enter the plantations except in groups, and he had been obliged to employ armed guards to keep them off. That very morning, he explained, he intended to hold a conference of his nobles to plan a campaign of defence against these marauders. He intended to drive them back into their mountains and inflict such heavy punishment that they would not venture into the plains again for many months. If only he had an aeroplane, he said wryly, he would know how to deal with the Shi'hou! 'Like you do in Afghanistan,' he added with a chuckle.

622 The sheikh, who was a fine-looking old man with a patriarchal, weather-beaten face, had a reputation for being one of the most fearless fighters in Oman, and his feud with Sharjah of ten years ago was still talked about in the desert. Hanging on the wall was a long ceremonial sword, with a chased gold handle; it is said that he had swept off the heads of three men with its blade with a single sweep. He had a face of great power, a tight-lipped mouth, a large hooked nose, and keen grey eyes under shaggy eyebrows. Although few of us understood his language, we all fell under the spell of his strong personality. He was kindly and courteous, but

*[The Sheikh of Ras-al-Kalmah -- Analyst]

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

down metal strips or even to construct a concrete surface. The advice of the Public Works Department was sought; they advised the Government that, since the ground was below sea-level and contained a veritable lake ten feet below the surface, the project would require an expensive pumping installation which, together with the materials, which would have to be imported from England, plus the skilled labour required, would cost not less than £1,000,000. The Air Ministry, looking for once into the future, and realizing that with new types of aircraft Sharjah might lose some of its former importance and usefulness, quickly decided that they would take no action. Thus, if the Sheikh of Sharjah or any of the Oman financiers imagine that the airfield is likely to become a 'Heath Row' of the East, they had better think again.

It is, of course, impossible to prophecy accurately the future of anything, but judging by present-day trends in aviation I do not think it is unduly pessimistic to foretell a day, perhaps in five or ten years' time, when Sharjah will be virtually closed down as a civil airport. I do believe it is likely, however, that it may be used by smaller aircraft, such as Dragon Rapides or Dominies and Lockheed types, which may operate shuttle services between bases on the Gulf. There is a tremendous trade in pearls and piece-goods between Arabia, Iraq and India, and time is an important factor in business to-day in the East. The modern Indian or Arab business man prefers to travel by plane, and I am confident that an internal air-line between Cairo and Karachi, stopping at Lydda, Baghdad, Basrah, Bahrain and Sharjah *en route*, would have a steady and growing demand. If such an air-line is not operated by British Overseas Airways, then it is fairly certain that an Indian civil air organization will obtain permission to operate one.

The American air authorities are extremely anxious to operate air-lines on this route, over which they have been flying military planes since 1942, and there is little doubt that they would welcome the opportunity of running short feeder services between Baghdad and Karachi, via Sharjah, if the British Government decided not to continue operating on this route. The Americans, who were represented at Sharjah by a unit of Air Transport Command, had an efficient air-line organization at Sharjah in 1945. It was built almost entirely by the Air Ministry Public Works Department, and the erection of buildings and hangars had priority over the R.A.F. and B.O.A.C. Flying Control management was shared by the A.T.C. and the R.A.F., whilst the Americans had their own

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

oyster beds during the season. In the little season, that is from April to May, only pearls of inferior grade, including the dull and greyish *singabasi* pearls, are found, although there are exceptions. The Gulf on the Arabian side is lined with oyster-pearl beds, although the largest are at Bahrain where they can be seen from the air in the green, translucent water. There is a good bed a few miles north-west of Sharjah, and another beyond Ras-al-Khaimah. Persian Gulf pearls are the finest in the world; the geological formation of the sea bottom and the temperature and shallowness of the water are said to be favourable to the pearl-oyster's growth.

The history of the Arabian pearl fisheries is shrouded in the mists of time; no one knows when they were discovered or exported to other countries. It is likely that King Solomon's pearls came from the Gulf, and the Maharajah of Jodpur told me that Sharjah and Bahrain pearls were exported to India at least a thousand years ago. Next to oil they are the most important product of Arabia although, unlike oil, they are subject to the dictates of fashion and the market is apt to be temperamental. At one time fantastic prices were paid for a single pearl of matchless beauty, and millionaires gave hundreds of thousands of pounds for a necklace; with the discovery of the cultured pearl, however, the market began to drop and prices had only a temporary recovery to their former high rates owing to the war.

During the war practically no pearls were exported to Europe or the United States, and in England the one hundred per cent purchase tax caused them to lose favour with the public. Many women now prefer cultured pearls, with their fine lustre and even shape, to natural pearls which are difficult to match. Although a small quantity of Persian Gulf pearls was smuggled into Europe between 1939 and 1945 by ships and aircraft, the bulk of pearl stocks was exported to India, by way of the great market at Bombay. Prices were strictly controlled by the Bombay stockbrokers and it was actually cheaper to buy them in India than in the Gulf.

Large cargoes of pearls of every grade and quality were despatched regularly by air from Bahrain and Sharjah and I myself have handled a consignment valued at 200,000 rupees. It was contained in a drum the size of a four-pound cocoa tin, tightly wrapped in linen gauze and heavily sealed. The package, which weighed about eight pounds, contained several hundred pearls of finest quality and was heavily insured. These sealed tins formed a normal part of our daily cargo and the merchants used to queue

228 up outside the traffic office at the Fort just before the arrival of the
439 aircraft, to have them weighed, insured and locked up in the safe. Only one package was ever lost in transit, and in this case the insurance company paid the consignors compensation after investigations lasting three years.

228 Pearl fishing is the principal source of wealth among the people
434 on the Arabian side. It has been estimated that, if the supply of pearls were to fail—either owing to a disease among the oysters or sterility due to poisoning of the beds—the effect would be disastrous; the ports of the Trucial Oman Coast, which have no other resources, would practically cease to exist. The purchasing power of the inhabitants of the eastern coast of Arabia depends almost entirely on the pearl fisheries. In normal times about five thousand boats are employed in the industry, and more than seventy-four thousand operatives are engaged, not taking into account their families. Apart from the divers and boats' crews there are numerous capitalists, large and small, with their dependents whose funds are invested in the industry.

439 The value of the trade varies with the demand; in 1833 the annual value of pearls exported from the Gulf was only £300,000; in 1886 it was £400,000; in 1904 it was only £30,439—an extremely poor season—whilst prior to the war it reached the high figure of £1,500,000. Whether in the near future the annual turnover will again exceed the million mark depends on two factors: the dictates of fashion, and the condition of the oyster beds.

228 Hassan's family have been engaged in the pearling industry for three hundred years, and he knows as much about pearls as any man. He can judge the weight of a pearl exactly by balancing it in his hand, and estimate its texture by scraping its surface with his teeth.
437 Many merchants carry a tiny pair of jewellers' scales with them, for business deals are often carried out in the café or even in the street. Many are sold on commission by 'agents' and I have even had pearls offered to me by bearers, coolies and guards.

228 Hassan told me a great deal about the pearling industry, although
825 some of the Arab lore is hardly scientific. Thus, if there is a poor crop, the natives often ascribe this to shortage of rain. There is a tradition that the young and shell-less oysters come to the surface when it is raining, or the moon is full. The raindrops are the seeds of fertility, while the moon produces lustre; the rain is the father of a good pearl and the oyster the mother. It is a poetical notion, and no one has disproved its truth.

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

The *Nakhuda* himself is very seldom free from debt, for the expenses of fitting out and provisioning the boats and of retaining the services of capable divers and making them advances, often as much as 3,000 rupees per season, make him equally dependent on the *Musaqqams*, or moneylenders. Should a *Nakhuda* be unable to pay off his debts, the *Salifat-al-Ghaus*, or 'Diving Court', a tribunal set up by the sheikh of the district, may order his boats to be sold and his divers to be handed over to the creditor, although his house and other personal property is exempt from seizure. Usually, however, the court fixes an annual instalment for the discharge of the debt, and the *Nakhuda* is then free to form relations with another *Musaqqam*, if he can find one willing to finance him in these circumstances. These rules, although drastic, are very necessary to protect the pearling industry from financial loss.

The diving court has other functions, one of which is to enforce the 'laws' of the industry as regards the engagement of labour, rates of interest, supervision of taxes due to the sheikhs, and the maintenance of a standard of quality of the pearls sold in the open market. Dealers who charge excess prices for pearls, or who pass bad or spurious pearls for those of first quality, are severely reprimanded or even suspended from trading, whilst the man who dares to bring a false or 'cultured' pearl into the Gulf is liable to be outlawed by the sheikh.

It is interesting to watch the brokers haggling over a heap of gleaming pearls in the market. It would take the average European several minutes to work out a price, but the Arab merchant, even when otherwise illiterate, is usually a clever mathematician and benefits by the fluctuations of market rates and by the discrepancies of the weighing appliances in use in the Gulf. Some experts, generally sea-going *Tawwashes*, or dealers, profess a power to distinguish roughly the depth of water and even the particular neighbourhood from which a pearl shown to them may have been obtained; thus they assert that pearls from the banks near Bahrain are marked by greater lustre, and those from banks further northward by greater 'solidity'. They all possess an uncanny ability to sum a pearl up at a glance, and the success of the individual trader depends chiefly upon his power to appraise the relative fineness of pearls belonging to the same class, and he has no set rules to assist his judgment.

The largest pearls are sent to India to be sold individually by the *chau*; but, in the assortment of the remainder into packets—

30: Gt. Britain G-5 (ca. 1918) 1920 MJ1 Saudi Arabia
Trucial Oman MK4

and Ghāfiri political factions (see Chap. VIII, p. 240), the former being Sunnis of the Maliki sect, the latter virtually Wahabis, though not of the militant order. Modern rifles are widely distributed both in town and country, but the traffic in arms has now been virtually suspended (cf. p. 247).

Industries and Trade

The most important industry is pearl-diving, which in summer employs most of the able-bodied men with more than 1,200 boats; though during the winter some of the divers take part in the ordinary fisheries (the second great industry of the coast), the majority take their ease, retained by the pearl-boat owners and contractors, by whom they are supported through the slack season. Agriculture employs the settled population of the interior; vegetables are raised by irrigation from wells in most places, and dates are also grown, though they seldom fully ripen S. of Ras el-Kheimah. Cereals only succeed in a few favoured spots such as *Sīr* in the Shameiliyah district. The live stock of the villages consists of camels, donkeys, cattle, sheep, and goats; horses are rare. The Bedouins subsist chiefly by their herds. In winter, when there is pasture, they roam far and wide; in the hot weather they gather about the more abundant wells, such as those of the *Jiri* plain in the N., and *Beinūnah* in the W.

Pearls are the most valuable export, and are sent almost entirely to India from the port of Dibai. The oyster-shells from which the pearls are taken come next in importance; it is questioned whether the practice of selling these, instead of at once returning them to the sea, may not in the long run tend to exhaust the pearl-banks. Dried fish are exported from Abu Dhabi.

The imports in order of their value are: grain and pulse, from India and Persia; cotton piece-goods from India; dates and date-juice from 'Irāq; coffee, chiefly from India; sugar, from or through India, and miscellaneous provisions from Persia. The only steamship port is Dibai, but the other coastal towns are used by native sea-going boats running to and from India, Persia, and 'Irāq. Inland trade with the Bedouins is of no great volume, but Trucial Oman shares that of the Bireimi oasis with the Sultanate. The coast between Ras Musandam and Abu Dhabi was formerly used as a base by smugglers of arms, bringing rifles and ammunition from Sohār through Bireimi, and loading for Persia and El-Qatar either at the coastal towns, or at lonely spots between them. Within recent years it was necessary to warn the Sheikhs of 'Ajmān, Shārjah,

30: Gt. Britain G-5 (ca. 1918) 1920 MJ1 Saudi Arabia
Trucial Oman MK4

439 and Dibai for their connivance in this traffic; in 1910 resistance was offered at Dibai to an armed party from H.M.S. *Hyacinth*, an encounter resulting in loss of life on both sides. Such illegal traffic satisfied the adventurous spirit of a maritime people, whose indulgence in buccaneering before the policing of the Gulf earned for their W. littoral the name of the Pirate Coast. But the establishment of the Arms Warehouse at Muscat (see Chap VIII, p. 247) has cut off the principal source of supply.

433 Local manufactures are few, and their products not sufficiently extensive to be exported. Fine sheep-wool abbas are made at Shārjah and daggers at Ras el-Kheimah. The latter are of the curved form universal along the Gulf from Koweit to the S., as also in parts of Western India.

Recent History and Present Politics

631 The position of the five ruling Sheikhs is regulated by two agree-
648 ments with the British Government. The first, signed in 1853, provides for the cessation of hostilities at sea between the signatories, and imposes on Great Britain the duty of enforcing peace and obtaining reparation for breaches of it. The second, signed in 1892, binds the Sheikhs not to enter into correspondence or agreement with any power other than the British Government, not to permit the agent of any other Government to reside within their territories, and not to cede, sell, mortgage, or otherwise alienate to any other Government any part of their respective territories. The apparent effect of the two agreements is to place the foreign relations of the Sheikhs under British control, and to make Great Britain responsible for their protection should they be endangered through carrying out their obligations. In 1913 there was a certain apprehension, especially at Abu Dhabi, that the victorious Emir of Nejd might extend his conquests on the side of Oman. The number of Trucial chiefs recognized by Great Britain may at any time be increased. The Sheikhs of Ras el-Kheimah, Hamrīyah, and Fujeirah are already practically independent. The sheikhdoms are very unequal in importance, ranging from considerable territories like those of Shārjah and Abu Dhabi to small districts consisting of little more than a single township and its environs. In the following sections the Principalities, or Sheikhdoms, are described in order from east to west.

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in two miles from their entrances. Thus it was that the pirate tribes were able to build their towns behind these natural booms, and to carry on their ruthless calling in defiance of the British and Portuguese navies — and to earn for their stronghold the much feared and romantic name, "The Pirate Coast".

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Trucial 'Oman, as it is called today, is ruled by six independent sheikhs, bound under old treaties with Britain to maintain a maritime truce for the prevention of piracy and slave-trading. Family feuds and inter-tribal quarrelling are as common among them as are the rusty, ancient cannon. Many of the latter are no doubt from British men-o'-war, and some are still used for ceremonial occasions, a party afterwards being despatched to retrieve the cannon-balls.

TO 361 504 ●439

Unspoiled by time, Sharjah is one of the principal little towns, but it lacks the enchantment of Dibai, a picturesque centre a few miles along the coast to the west. A wide, shallow inlet divides Dibái and its waterfront of quaint little coffee-houses, and provides anchorage for dhows that bring transshipped goods from other continents. In the large market-place, spread on either side of the inlet and connected by a ferry-service of numerous little pole-propelled craft, the bedouin, with his henna-dyed beard and ancient rifle, can be seen fingering everything that is on show, from modern radio sets to ladies' lingerie, but he has little use for some of the strange products of the West.

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p. 191 (A)

2: Codrai G-3 (1948-1950) 1950 MK1 Oman
Trucial Oman MK4
Bedouin MJ4

ladies' lingerie, but he has little use for some of the strange products of the West. For the townsman, who is living in a mixed community of Arabs from many parts of the Persian Gulf, Persians and Indians, it is a different proposition, and his materialism has made Dibai a small British export area, though mostly for the less refined goods that are unable to find buyers on a more discriminating market.

The primitive bedouins who live by the foothills of the main mountain range, who owe allegiance to no one, are a constant cause of worry to the sheikhs, from whom they extract levies in return for protection; if the money is not forthcoming they raid the villages and carry off goods, camels and children. On the whole, however, the people of the coast seem to have a peaceful enough existence, making their living by, among other things, pearling, fishing and boat-building.

At several points along the coast the wells are some distance inland, and water has to be transported to the villages by camel or donkey. Though brackish and unpalatable, it is expensive; the cost of buying water is a burden on the poor, and they take only sufficient for their minimum needs. Even so, the water-pot is always at hand when a traveller passes by — a simple hospitality that is often very touching. The lot of the dogs, a wretched one at the best of times in the